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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a model for sensitizing students to the richness of literary texts based on Lee and VanPatten's (1995) structured input/output approach to teaching foreign languages (FL). It begins by discussing the difficulties and challenges of intermediate-level FL courses, noting that the concept of "bridge courses" may be faulty because it ignores the students who do not pursue language study beyond the intermediate level. The model, using structured input and output activities, focuses on a communicative approach to teaching literary texts that can enhance the language learning experience for students with different levels of language proficiency and varied reasons for studying FL. The article provides examples of this approach by presenting several input and output activities for teaching a poem and a narrative text. It concludes by affirming the importance of incorporating student-centered communicative strategies when teaching literary texts and challenging the profession to develop these kinds of activities for the benefit of both novice and experienced teachers. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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ED 481 417

# Teaching Literary Texts at the Intermediate Level: A Structured Input Approach

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In this article, it will be taken for granted that it is important for literary works to remain a part of the foreign language curriculum (see Jurasek 1996; McCarthy 1998; Tucker 2000). The question, however, is how to integrate the teaching of literature into the modern foreign language classroom, where teacher-centered activities are discouraged and communication among students is paramount. Perceiving the need for innovative methods to teach literature in the communicative classroom, Virginia Scott (2001) challenges her colleagues "in both language and literature to avail ourselves of the research in SLA in order to rethink the teaching of literature" (p. 547). The goal should be to adapt theories that are shown to be effective in language and grammar instruction to the teaching of literature and hence to make literature a more complementary component within four skills courses.

Lee and VanPatten's (1995) *Making Communicative Teaching Happen* describes a theory of foreign language pedagogy that has the potential to be effective in the literature classroom, especially at the intermediate level. The authors propose that various types of structured input and output activities used for teaching both reading comprehension and grammar can also be applied to the teaching of literature. It is important to stress that reading for comprehension is only one part of the purpose of studying literature; the analysis of literary texts is valuable precisely because of what can be found behind the literal meanings of the words on the page.

In this article, I propose that structured input and output activities can not only lead students to discover the general meaning of a poem or a work of prose but also can help them to become aware of underlying themes, various literary devices, and other elements that enrich literary works; hence, foreign language reading becomes more intellectually stimulating and satisfying.

This article is organized in the following manner: in the first section, I discuss the difficulties of teaching foreign language classes at the intermediate level, and I describe the ways in which the study of



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literature can be incorporated into the communicative classroom. In the second section, I summarize some of the important tenets of Lee and VanPatten's (1995) theory and demonstrate how it can be applied to the teaching of literature. Last, I provide examples of the kinds of texts and activities that work well within this framework.

## The Intermediate Level: Difficulties and Challenges

It has been widely acknowledged that there are problems in the design of the foreign language curricula at the intermediate level. For the past two decades, scholars have debated whether literature should be taught in postsecondary foreign language classes (see Birckbichler and Muyskens 1980; Bretz and Persin 1987; Harper 1988; Jurasek 1996; Knutson 1993; Kramsch 1985; McCarthy 1998; Muyskens 1983; Schultz 1996; Schulz 1981; Tucker 2000). Byrnes (1998) points out that faculty members' disagreements over the role that literature should play in departmental curricula can create much tension within language departments, especially in those that are experiencing dramatic decreases in enrollment.

At the intermediate level, the discussion has become especially heated, primarily for two reasons: first, it is particularly difficult to design and to teach effective intermediate courses, and second, it is at the intermediate level that there exists a real opportunity to increase enrollment and to build programs. Poorly conceived intermediate courses foster the disintegration of language programs. According to Kramsch (1993), part of the problem is that instructors may lack confidence in their ability to teach literature: "Some teachers still feel hesitant to use literary texts in the language classroom. Their hesitation is often a reflex of academic self-defense. As language teachers they are told that they are competent only to teach language, not literature" (p. 7). Similarly, literature specialists may be unsure about how to teach literary texts in a class intended to be communicative.

The typical intermediate foreign-language class at the university level is often difficult to teach because it is composed of two different types of students: those who only want to fulfill their language requirement and do not intend to continue their study beyond the intermediate level, and those who are considering a major or a minor in the language. The students in the first group may have little interest in the subject or in improving their proficiency in the language. In contrast, those in the latter group often have had success in the first-year language courses and are enthusiastic about furthering their studies; sometimes, they have already mastered a foreign language and are eager to learn another. In addition, there are students in this group

who have studied the language in high school and, thus, tend to be more fluent and more comfortable with the language.

Because of their varied backgrounds and levels of proficiency and interest, students at the intermediate level might be considered to be in the "adolescence" of foreign language learning. In other words, the intermediate level can be viewed as an awkward, in-between stage. At the elementary level students read easy, usually nonliterary material, acquire a childlike command of the language, and engage in simple conversations about their daily lives. At the advanced level (third year and above), students enter "adulthood"; the advanced courses emphasize complex themes and often focus on literature. At the intermediate level, one finds an identity crisis like that which happens in adolescence: the students are not yet mature nor are they children. In addition, they progress through this stage of development at different rates.

Referring to intermediate courses as "bridges" or as "filling the gap" between elementary and advanced studies, unfortunately implies a disregard for the students who will not continue on to the next level. We must evaluate our intermediate curriculum to determine what will be useful for these students as well as what will inspire those who are considering becoming majors or minors. Although it is generally assumed that oral communication is the most important goal of studying a foreign language, Schulz (1981) points out: "Many educators agree that reading is probably the longest retained skill; moreover, unlike speaking, reading can be developed to a relatively sophisticated level rather early" (p. 43). Reading is also an area in which students who have difficulty communicating in the spoken language may excel.

It is true that some students say that they are not interested in studying literature (see Davis, Kline, and Stoekl 1995; Gonzales-Berry 1996). They regard the study of literary texts as irrelevant in their lives, ineffective for developing their communicative skills, or just plain boring (see Scott 2001, p. 542). The successful integration of literature into the curriculum relies on the selection of intellectually challenging, interesting works with which students of all levels can interact. The themes and topics should be complex, yet the language of the texts should not be too difficult (see Carrell 1984; Jurasek 1996; Knuston 1993; and Kramsch 1985, who discuss the importance of choosing appropriate texts).

After having carefully chosen appropriate readings, the instructor must lead students to awareness of the structures that may impede their comprehension and help them focus on these constructions in order to understand the text's general meaning. As I discuss below, structured input and output activities can be employed to assure that students have a basic understanding of the work (e.g., in a story,

recognizing the important characters and following the plot; in a poem, deciding who is speaking and the situation he or she is in). After acquiring this knowledge, they are ready to discover the elements of the text that lie beneath the surface and that contribute toward making it a work of literature. At this point, the types of input and output exercises used to ensure reading comprehension can be employed to take students to a deeper level of understanding and to an appreciation of the richness of literary works.

In the next section, structured input and output are described in greater detail, and I explain how this framework can be applied to the teaching of literature. In addition, specific techniques are outlined and demonstrated, using examples of two French texts that work well in the intermediate classroom.

## Structured Input and Output

Lee and VanPatten (1995) present a method for teaching foreign languages that relies heavily on the role of structured input. They contend that when students are acquiring grammatical structures, they should receive a great deal of comprehensible input that contains the given structures. After students have received a substantial amount of input, this input should become what is called intake, which is "a reduced, sometimes slightly altered set of input data" (p. 94). This leads to the students' acquiring a developing system that forms at the stage where they begin to internalize the target structures. Only at this point can students be expected to begin producing the target structures. Lee and VanPatten explain: "Note the contradiction between traditional grammar practice and our model of acquisition. The development of an internal system is input dependent; it happens when learners receive and process meaning-bearing input. Traditional grammar practice, on the other hand, is exclusively output oriented" (p. 94). Lee and VanPatten also postulate that students "must become more active, more responsible for their own learning" (p. 13). The instructor becomes the resource person, or in their terminology, the "architect" of the classroom, while students "become information gatherers and negotiators as well as builders and coworkers" (p. 17). I shall show that both concepts (input leading to output, and making students responsible for their own learning) can be applied to the study of literature.

In recent years, schema theory has become an integral part of foreign language instruction, and many current textbooks employ some of the tenets of the theory in the exercises that accompany readings. These textbooks provide prereading activities that activate appropriate frames of reference that help students understand a reading more

easily; for example, they draw attention to the way in which a text is organized so that students gain a better idea of the purpose of the text, which leads to improved comprehension. Relying heavily on research done in schema theory (see Carrell 1984; Rumelhart 1980), Lee and VanPatten (1995) offer many other strategies for teaching students to read. Following the hypothesis of schema theory, that students should incorporate any background information that they already possess into their understanding of the text, an instructor should provide students with an appropriate knowledge base before they begin reading. Lee and VanPatten identify several techniques for activating students' background knowledge and for preparing them to interact with a given text. The authors suggest brainstorming; analyzing titles, headings, and illustrations; activating world knowledge; giving a pretest; and scanning for specific information to help students prepare for reading the text (pp. 200–04).

As mentioned above, however, comprehending the meaning of the words on the page is only one part of studying a literary text. Scott (2001) explains that a major goal of a literature course she recently taught was to have her students "see the text as a creative work with layers of meaning" (p. 542). This objective succinctly distinguishes the teaching of reading from the teaching of literature. The goal of reading is understanding the main ideas of a text. The ultimate satisfaction of studying literature is the discovery of layers of meaning. This idea of discovery is essential. Through interactions with the text, both in pre- and postreading activities, students should be the ones who come up with theories about the deeper meanings of the text, some of which the instructor has led them to formulate, others of which the instructor may not have anticipated.

Once the students have grasped the intricacies of the literary work they are studying and have recognized the techniques used by the author, they are prepared to create output at the discourse level. Lee and VanPatten (1995) emphasize "the importance of allowing learners to access form and structure at the sentence level before proceeding to connected sentences" (p. 122). Students should begin with basic tasks and move to more complex ones after they have understood the structures at hand. Therefore, it is beneficial for students to produce simple sentences before being asked to create longer forms of discourse.

Literary texts, poetry in particular, provide models for students' own writing. Scott (1996) explains: "Because written discourse is culturally determined, reading should be linked to writing. Extensive reading, or reading texts for the gist, can help students to internalize patterns of discourse, levels of register, and links between language and culture. Intensive reading, or close textual analysis, can provide

students with models to follow" (p. 155). Thus, after studying a poem, students can try to imitate the writer's style. Kramsch (1993) asserts: "We should not underestimate the pleasure students can derive from experimenting with literary form, nor should we feel bashful, even in language classes, about discussing the craft behind the students' products" (p. 171). As shown in the next section, students can follow the pattern of a poem and come up with creative works of their own. They can also be encouraged to interact with a story by writing letters to the characters or by relating the themes to their own lives and experiences. These types of exercises appear in the following section where I show how to apply Lee and VanPatten's theory to the teaching of literary texts.

Before students begin producing output, however, they must receive a great deal of input about the general meaning of the texts and about the literary themes that they will discover at a deeper level of analysis. For each of the two works discussed below, a poem and a *récit*, students are required to work with the input first. For example, they decide whether or not they agree with lists of statements, first about the text's plot or situation and its top level of meaning, and second, about some of the less obvious aspects of the text (the more abstract, deeper levels). Through doing these exercises, students are led to focus on literary elements (such as imagery and symbolism, figures of speech, allusions to other sources, tone, how the sounds of a poem contribute to its meaning, character motivation, etc.) and to hypothesize what they consider to be the underlying meanings of the text.

Next, students move to the output phase where they are required to support the hypotheses that they have constructed in the input sections. They find appropriate words and phrases in the text to back up their arguments, and they produce short sentences or questions in the target language. Finally, they communicate at the discourse-level, which assumes their having grasped the elements in the text that distinguish it as a work of literature.

## Poetry

Jacques Prévert's poem "Déjeuner du matin" [Breakfast] is commonly included in curricula at both the elementary and intermediate levels of study. It is a simple poem with a series of actions written in the *passé composé*:[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| Il a mis le café | He poured the coffee |
| Dans la tasse | Into the cup |
| Il a mis le lait | He poured the milk |
| Dans la tasse de café | Into the coffee |

| | |
|---|---|
| Il a mis le sucre | He put the sugar |
| Dans le café au lait | In the café au lait |
| Avec la petite cuiller | With the little spoon |
| Il a tourné | He stirred |
| Il a bu le café au lait | He drank the café au lait |
| Et il a reposé la tasse | And he put the cup down again |
| Sans me parler | Without speaking to me |
| Il a allumé | He lit |
| une cigarette | A cigarette |
| Il a fait des ronds | He blew rings |
| Avec la fumée | With the smoke |
| Il a mis les cendres | He put the ashes |
| Dans le cendrier | In the ashtray |
| Sans me parler | Without speaking to me |
| Sans me regarder | Without looking at me |
| Il s'est levé | He got up |
| Il a mis | He put |
| Son chapeau | His hat |
| Sur sa tête | On his head |
| Il a mis | He put on |
| Son manteau de pluie | His raincoat |
| Parce qu'il pleuvait | Because it was raining |
| Et il est parti | And he left |
| Sous la pluie | In the rain |
| Sans une parole | Without a word |
| Sans me regarder | Without looking at me |
| Et moi j'ai pris | And me, I put |
| Ma tête dans ma main | My head in my hands |
| Et j'ai pleuré. | And I cried. |

Since students rarely have difficulty understanding the literal meaning of this poem, it is an excellent text for them to study. First, students should read the poem to understand the general sense of what is going on. Then they should study it to discover the elements that enrich it: tone, form, rhythm, sound, figurative language, and ambiguity.

The students' first reaction to the poem is usually favorable. But why do they like it? What is it about the poem that appeals to them? For one thing, students tend to like the poem because they immediately understand the words. However, if it were just an easy poem with no deeper meanings, it is doubtful that it would leave much of an impression on them. What is remarkable in "Déjeuner du matin" is the depth of the emotion conveyed in the poem. The poet accomplishes this effect by incorporating various literary elements. For example, the repetitiveness and the rhythm of the short lines create a tone that seems matter-of-fact and emotionless, which contrasts with the narrator's sorrow. Another striking contrast is the banality of the ordinary

actions that occur against the background of profound grief. Although this emotion is not apparent until the end of the poem, there are signs early on that the narrator is indeed upset. For example, the alliteration of "s" sounds (sous la pluie/sans une parole/sans me regarder) suggests sighing and sobbing. Another literary device that appears in the poem is the idea of the "pathetic fallacy," which refers to a connection between what is happening in nature and a person's emotional state. In the poem, there is a correspondence between the rain that is falling and the speaker's tears and sorrow. Students should be led to consider this connection. (Would the poem be as powerful if, for example, the sun were shining?)

Another literary element is the poem's intended ambiguity, which makes the poem more interesting and more relevant to a diverse group of readers. Is the speaker a man or a woman? A child or an adult? Does the scene take place in a restaurant or in the kitchen of a house? There is really no way to tell from the words on the page. Therefore, the poem can be interpreted in several different ways, depending upon the perspective of the reader.

The structured input and output exercises that are provided below help to lead students along the path of discovering the literary richness of the poem, allowing them to interact with the text and arrive at their own interpretations. All the activities are meant to be done in groups and are intended to stimulate discussion among group members, except for the final, discourse-level structured output exercises.[2]

### Exercise 1: Selecting Alternatives (Input)

(This activity should occur before the students read the poem. They are required to choose the most appropriate answer from the list given after each sentence. The exercise serves to provide students with background information about some of the important ideas of the poem such as quarreling through silence and the pain of being ignored. The questions lead the students to become aware of literary devices, such as the symbolic relationship between an action and an emotion, and the connection between nature and the human situation. After doing this exercise, the students will be ready to read the poem.)

1. When people argue,

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They refuse to speak to each other. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They stare at each other. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They don't like each other. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They misunderstand each other. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |

2. When people are sad,

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| They run away. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They cry. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They talk. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They smoke. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They drink coffee. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| They sleep. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |

3. When it rains,

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| People feel sad. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| People feel happy. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
| People don't want to go outside. | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Never |

### Exercise 2: Binary Options (Input)

(This activity begins with several statements that are designed to ensure that the students have understood the main ideas of the poem. Through questions about setting and tone, it reveals the poem's ambiguity, and it leads students to discover that their interpretations of the poem may differ from those of their peers.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| It is nice out. | Agree | Disagree |
| The speaker is happy. | Agree | Disagree |
| The man is talkative. | Agree | Disagree |
| The man drinks his coffee black. | Agree | Disagree |
| The speaker is a woman. | Agree | Disagree |
| The speaker is a child. | Agree | Disagree |
| This scene takes place in a café. | Agree | Disagree |
| This scene takes place in the kitchen of a house. | Agree | Disagree |
| The man doesn't know the speaker. | Agree | Disagree |
| The man is ignoring the speaker. | Agree | Disagree |
| The man doesn't see the speaker. | Agree | Disagree |
| The speaker has a new haircut and looks very different. | Agree | Disagree |
| Behind the routine of everyday events, there are often deep emotions. | Agree | Disagree |
| Early in the poem, the speaker indicates that he or she may begin crying. | Agree | Disagree |

### Exercise 3: Matching (Input)

(This activity allows students to discover symbolism and symbolic actions as well as the possible correspondence between people's emotions and what is happening in nature. Note: The suggested matches are given on the same line here, but they would be scattered on students' sheets.)

| | |
|---|---|
| rain | tears |
| sun | happiness |
| raining | crying |
| hand | blocks tears |
| raincoat | blocks the rain |
| make smoke rings | indifference |
| "without speaking to me" | rejection |

### Exercise 4: Questions (Output at the sentential level)

(Students are asked to write five questions that they would like to ask the two main characters. This exercise helps them to recognize the poem's ambiguity and the significance of actions and images that may suggest symbolic meanings. For example, they might think about why the poet shows the man drinking coffee sweetened with milk and sugar rather than black coffee. Is there a possible symbolic meaning? Are his deliberate, silent actions of pouring the coffee and the milk, putting in the sugar, and stirring it, symbolic?)

**Model:**

1. Why won't you talk to your wife (child, girlfriend)?
2. Why do you think your husband (father, boyfriend) is angry (or another emotion, such as disappointed or depressed). Is he leaving you with regret (because of another lover, to go away on a trip, because he lost custody of you)?
3. Where will you (the speaker and/or the man) go afterwards?

### Exercise 5: Another Perspective (Output at the sentence level)

(Students are asked to imitate the style of the poet by rewriting the poem from the perspective of the other person, perhaps in the present tense. In the model below, they will discover a drastic change in tone: what makes the speaker seem amused?)

**Model:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dans un café | In a café |
| Je bois mon café | I drink my coffee |
| Elle me regarde sans cesse | She keeps looking at me |
| Qui est-elle? | Who is she? |
| Pourquoi me regarde-t-elle? | Why is she looking at me? |
| Est-ce que je la connais? | Do I know her? |
| J'essaie de boire mon café. | I try to drink my coffee |
| Tranquillement. | Peacefully |
| Mais elle me regarde sans cesse. | But she keeps on looking at me. |

### Exercise 6: Your Own Poem (Output at the discourse level)

(Students have another opportunity to imitate the poet in their own work.)

**Directions:**

Write a poem using simple sentences written in the *passé composé*. Possible topics may include leaving home for the first time to go to college or attending a wedding or a funeral. Be sure to convey emotion in the poem; establish a contrast between the speaker's highly emotional state and the matter-of-fact style of the lines. At the end of the poem, there should be an action that clearly shows the speaker's feelings, such as the distraught utterance: "J'ai pris ma tête dans mes mains, et j'ai pleuré."

## The Short Story

A short story or an excerpt from a longer work can be effectively employed in the intermediate classroom. For example, "Mère" [Mother], taken from the longer work *La Clé sur la porte* [The Key above the Door] by Algerian author Marie Cardinal, describes a woman's alienation from her mother due to the mother's obsession with an infant daughter who died seventeen years earlier. In this *récit*, which takes place in an Algerian cemetery, the narrator describes a yearly trip to the cemetery with her mother and reveals the jealousy she feels because of the love that her mother has for the dead child.

This story is difficult for students because it contains mostly long, descriptive paragraphs and only five lines of dialogue. There is a great deal of new vocabulary, though it is glossed in the *Liens* (Hammadou 1994) edition. Therefore, it is important that the structured input activities ensure that students understand the general plot of the story before leading them to interpret the deeper levels of meanings of the text. During the structured input exercises, the appropriate frames of

reference should be activated; students should be asked to think about literary elements that are not necessarily immediately apparent when reading the text, such as allusions, religious images and symbols, and contrasts.

Recognizing the Christian overtones is essential for students to understand the deeper meanings of the text. Cardinal employs various literary devices that incorporate underlying Catholic themes. For example, there are several biblical allusions in the story. Most important is the Virgin Mary as the archetypal perfect mother, who stands in contrast to the narrator's flawed mother. This opposition is just one of the many striking polarities that students should be led to discover. Some of the other contrasts are listed in Exercise 3 below.

The narrator's using the *récit* as a form of confession is also important in understanding the significance of the story. The narrator appears to be telling the story in order to confess her jealous and unforgiving thoughts. The problem is that she does not really repent; she appears unable to get beyond her anger and her jealousy, and, at the end of the story, her sense of isolation and despair becomes apparent. In the final structured output exercise, students should be encouraged to explore the religious topics of forgiveness and repentance.

### Exercise 1: Matching (Input)

(This exercise, which is done before reading the text, enables students to learn some of the more difficult vocabulary that is essential to understanding the story. It also creates a frame in which students are guided to think about religious overtones, so they will be attentive to religious images, symbols, and allusions when reading the text.)

| | |
|---|---|
| l'ossuaire [ossuary] | where bones are kept |
| la dalle [stone] | a piece of marble |
| un robinet [faucet] | where water comes out |
| une tombe [grave] | where a body is buried |
| la Toussaint [All Saints' Day] | a holiday in France when people visit cemeteries |
| la Confession [confession] | the act of telling one's sins |
| la Vierge Marie [Virgin Mary] | the perfect mother |

### Exercise 2: Binary Options (Input)

(This exercise begins with some basic statements about the plot to ensure that the students have understood the text. Then, it moves on

to more subjective ideas, allowing students to explore their own perceptions of the themes of the text, and introduces religious ideas. It also leads students to think about character analysis.)

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1. The author has written this story to show her sadness about never having known her sister.
2. The narrator's task at the cemetery is to take her sister's bones to the ossuary.
3. It is a horrible day at the cemetery, rainy and cold.
4. The mother becomes cross with the narrator because she shows no emotion at her sister's grave.
5. The narrator feels ignored and unloved.
6. The narrator is moved by the religious icons found in the cemetery.
7. A mother will never get over the loss of a child.
8. There is no such thing as a perfect mother.
9. It is natural for children to be jealous of one another and to compete for their mothers' love.
10. It is unusual to be jealous of someone who has died.
11. It is easier to love someone who is dead than someone who is alive.
12. It is normal to feel that one's parents prefer one's siblings.

### Exercise 3: Finding Examples (Output at the sentence level)

(As mentioned above, in this story, one of the most striking literary elements is the contrasts, which produce a tension between opposites. Students are asked to find examples in the text that fit the following oppositions. It is hoped that through this activity, students will also discover the religious overtones of the story, such as allusions to angels, the Virgin Mary, the concepts of forgiveness and repentance, and the consequences of making a confession while still filled with anger and resentment.)

life/death
love/hatred
beauty/ugliness
perfect child/flawed child
perfect mother/flawed mother

pleasant smells/bad odors
purity/sin
confession/hardness of heart
forgiving/implacable

### Exercise 4: Writing a Letter (Output at the discourse level)

(This exercise reinforces the students' understanding of the literary elements of tone and character analysis.)

1. Write a letter from the daughter to her mother, explaining why she wants to cut off contact with the family.
2. Write a letter from the mother to the daughter, asking for her forgiveness.

## Conclusion

The two literary works presented in this article serve as examples of the ways in which the theory of structured input and output can be applied to teaching literature. In the traditional literature classroom, students are usually asked to read a story, poem, or play and then answer a series of questions based on it to ensure that they have understood it. Then the instructor might facilitate a discussion of the work, asking students about literary elements. In contrast, the type of approach advocated in this article enables students to interact more actively with the text and to discover its many layers of meaning through such interactions. Because of the input activities that the students do both before and after reading, they are led to gain an appreciation of literary style as well as become aware of many of the deeper meanings of the work. After they have attained a thorough understanding of the text and its intricacies have become part of the students' developing system (Lee and VanPatten 1995), students are then ready to produce output and to form their own interpretations of what they have read.

The preparation of structured input and output activities to teach literature is time-consuming for the instructor, but students can be asked to contribute to the development of such activities. For example, after reading a text, students could work in small groups and develop lists of true and false assertions about the text. Then, all the students could decide with which assertions they agree or disagree. The groups could find examples of literary elements, such as irony, ambiguity, allusion, imagery, symbolism, tone, alliteration, and various figures of speech, and the class could try to determine their contributions to the text.

It is important that foreign language textbooks include the teaching of literature, and, to guide instructors, they should incorporate the types of input and output exercises that applied linguists have proposed for the communicative classroom. Especially at large universities where graduate teaching assistants teach literature at the intermediate level, such guidance should be provided since these instructors are in the process of developing and refining their teaching skills. They need materials and methods of instruction. Over the last two decades, most graduate teaching assistants at American universities have been trained how to teach students to communicate in a foreign language, but they have not been trained how to teach students to understand and appreciate literary texts (see Harper 1988; Kramsch 1993; Muyskens 1983). Muyskens (1983) agrees: "It is ironic that those who will spend their lives teaching literature are rarely introduced to methods for doing so" (p. 414). In order to help teachers who are new to the field as well as those who currently limit themselves to teaching only language skills or only literature, there must be further collaboration between applied linguists and literature specialists. In that way, students of foreign languages will benefit from the innovative methods of the communicative classroom, which can make them more sensitive to the richness of literature.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Editions Gallimard for allowing me to reprint this poem.
2. These exercises should be created and performed completely in French. They are provided in English here, however, to make them more accessible to the general reader.

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